

falling for nearly a decade. This is unacceptable.

We must reverse the decline in NIH funding, and work to support other Federal research programs. The research done by these programs saves lives and improves quality of life. Funding these programs also makes sound economic sense: Federally funded biomedical research is an important driver of economic growth throughout the United States. In 2013, NIH grants to my State alone supported an estimated 23,122 jobs. However, while the United States has been the world leader in medical research, other nations such as China are dramatically ramping up their investment, threatening our dominance in the field. We must work to continue investments that support patients, improve quality of life and create jobs that benefit all Americans.

In addition to advocating for NIH funding with Senator BURR—indicative of the bipartisan support the NIH budget enjoys—I am also a cosponsor of S. 289, the American Cures Act, which would authorize increases in Federal research budgets at the NIH, but also at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Defense Health Program and the Veterans Medical and Prosthetics Research Program. As we support those suffering from multiple sclerosis, we must also remember the importance of federally funded medical research. We cannot afford, from a public health or economic standpoint, not to support biomedical progress.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF AUTISM SPEAKS

• Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I wish to acknowledge Autism Speaks as they celebrate 10 years as a leading organization dedicated to serving people with autism and their families. Founded by Bob and Suzanne Wright—concerned grandparents of a child with autism—on February 25, 2005, Autism Speaks has grown to become not just a national leader in the conversation about autism, but a world leader.

Ten years ago, Congress had yet to pass the landmark law now known after two reauthorizations as the Autism CARES Act. The estimated rate of autism in the United States—according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—at that time was about 1 in 150. Today, the CDC estimates that the rate of autism is about 1 in 68. These same figures show that my home State of New Jersey has the highest rate of autism incidence in the Nation, at 1 in 45. It is because of the countless stories of people from my home State—from the parents seeking help for their children, to the teachers and counselors who help people on the autism spectrum to grow and develop, to the researchers seeking to under-

stand the causes of autism—that I am so passionately committed to confronting the challenge of autism, and Autism Speaks has been a leading voice on this issue for a decade.

Over the past 10 years, Autism Speaks has committed more than \$525 million towards autism research, awareness, services, and advocacy. Most of these funds have gone to support science and medical research, including a new partnership with Google through the MSSNG program, which will sequence and store the world's largest database of genomic information on autism. Autism Speaks has raised awareness of autism worldwide, and has partnerships with organizations in 60 countries across the globe. Autism Speaks provides funds for services for people with autism through a number of grant programs and scholarships. It is also no secret that Autism Speaks has served as a leading advocate in seeking Federal legislation to address the challenges of autism.

I am proud to have championed the passage of the Autism Coordination, Accountability, Research, Education and Support Act, also known as the Autism CARES Act, which passed this body by unanimous consent on July 31, 2014. President Obama signed the Autism CARES Act into law on August 8, 2014. This law ensures that we continue the critical programs established in 2006 that provide for autism research as well as support services to individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. The Autism CARES Act also makes a number of updates and improvements on the original law, starting with better organization and coordination of Federal autism programs, including new mechanisms to ensure that goals are being met and that Federal dollars are being spent efficiently. It also requires that a report be written that focuses on the needs of young adults on the autistic spectrum or with another developmental disability and the challenges they face when they transition from school-based services to those they need during adulthood, which is a critical need that often goes unspoken. Autism Speaks' advocacy on behalf of those with autism and their families was vital to securing overwhelming bipartisan support for this law and ensuring that it passed through Congress and into law.

As they mark their 10th anniversary, I congratulate Autism Speaks for the decade of great work that they do and express my gratitude and support as they serve as a leading voice in our national discussion on autism for decades to come. •

TRIBUTE TO DR. WILLIAM MEEHAN

• Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I wish to recognize Dr. William A. Meehan, who has served with great distinction and honor at Jacksonville State University for more than 40 years. I have known him since he became president

in 1999, and my admiration for his leadership and for Jacksonville State University has only grown each year. Dr. Meehan is retiring from his post as president of JSU on June 30, 2015, where his extraordinary leadership and vision will be sorely missed.

Dr. Meehan, along with his board of trustees, set a bold vision for Jacksonville State University. He inspired his team to put students first, to inspire their intellectual curiosity, and to nurture critical thinking, communication skills, and creativity in problem-solving. He led the creation of the university's first bold strategic plan that focuses on 21st-century skills.

President Meehan set a course for JSU that would not only move the university forward but would fast-forward. Now, starting in the fall of 2015, 500 entering freshmen at JSU will have an iPad; these students will have global technology at their fingertips and be prepared for the rigors of their academic pursuits.

Under President Meehan's leadership JSU has excelled in many pursuits. Research funding continues to rise, with more than \$23 million in grants received last year, an increase of 515 percent. ACT scores of incoming freshmen have risen significantly over the past decade, housing occupancy rates have improved from 64 percent to 90 percent, and student-to-faculty ratio is a stellar 17 to 1 under Dr. Meehan's leadership. JSU now enjoys a wide alumni base of more than 60,000 in all 50 States and 95 countries around the world.

President Meehan has focused the university on innovative approaches such as the creation of 12 interdisciplinary centers that yield practical applications and solutions to real-world problems. These centers concentrate on regional education, teaching and learning, security, applied forensics, disaster and community resilience, disease ecology, ecosystems, behavioral studies, economic development, emergency preparedness, environmental policy, and veteran support.

Further, under President Meehan's leadership, JSU was just awarded a 10-year reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission of Colleges, SACSCOC. JSU also enjoys significant program accreditations, attesting to the high-quality academics provided. JSU is also fierce on the playing field and lays claim to being the only school in the Nation to hold NCAA national titles in football, men's basketball and baseball at the Division I or Division II levels.

President Meehan has a deep and abiding commitment to partnerships with K-12, community colleges, and the region in which he serves. He has extensive service with community initiatives and on education, economic development and community service strategic boards. His view of education is a seamless process flowing from kindergarten through graduate school,